

John Appleton Brown, New England Landscape Painter

In paint and pastels, John Appleton Brown captured the gentle hills, open fields, blossom-laden orchards, meandering streams, and marshes of West Newbury and its surrounds in pictures that [“make\[\] you think of the happy places that you have seen, and the happy events that have occurred in your summer days....”](#) Brown was born here on July 12, 1844, the second of two sons of [George Frederick Handel Brown \(a combmaker\)](#) and [Asenath L. Page](#). In his childhood, his parents saw and encouraged his talent and his interest in nature around him. According to biographer [Frank Torrey Robinson](#), Brown “could gaze from his windows down on to the slope that reached the banks of the Merrimac, and could feel the charms of the lights that spread over the snowy hills or green fields of the upland country; these views were constantly before his eyes and impressed his mind with the wonders of creation.”

Appleton Brown spent summers painting during his high school years in Newburyport. Initially he spent a year studying with New England landscape painter [Alfred Thompson Bricher](#). After a year working in a Boston studio shared with fellow-novice [Benjamin Curtis Porter](#), in 1866 Brown traveled to France, where in 1867-68 he studied under landscape artist [Emile Lambinet](#).

By the 1870s, Brown was a successful and [well-known Boston painter](#). In 1874 he married Newburyport native Agnes Augusta Bartlett, [herself a noted artist](#), and in the fall of that year the couple left for France, where they studied and painted. He displayed and sold works in the prestigious [Paris Salon](#) of 1875, whose jurors included established [Barbizon school](#) painters.

According to curator and art writer [Barbara J. MacAdam](#), in the 1880s Brown adopted a brighter palette and “turned more frequently to images of fruit trees in full flower, lending him the sobriquet of ‘Appleblossom Brown.’” At the invitation of [Francis Davis Millet](#), in 1886 the Browns joined an artists’ colony in England, where Americans including [John Singer Sargent](#) and [Edwin Austin](#)

[Abbey](#) were working. Brown’s paintings of the English countryside, much like in New England, were [well received in Boston](#).

In the 1890s, Brown’s success had expanded well beyond Boston. When he participated in an art show in Chicago, a [reviewer](#) described Brown’s picture “In the Month of May” as “a brilliant, joyous study of apple-blossoms and sunny greens.” In 1891, the Browns moved from Boston to New York City, which offered a more vibrant arts scene. In 1893 Brown received a medal at the [World’s Columbian Exposition](#) in Chicago.

Throughout, Agnes and Appleton Brown traveled each summer to their West Newbury [home](#), where they sketched and painted scenes in the countryside. Beginning in the late 1880s the couple summered not only in West Newbury, but also at [Celia Thaxter’s](#) salon on [Appledore Island](#) among the [Isles of Shoals](#). There Brown became a close friend of [Childe Hassam](#) and painted seascapes, including the powerful [“Storm at the Isles of Shoals.”](#)

Brown’s art had deep connections to poetry. In 1879 Brown illustrated [Lucy Larcom’s](#) [Landscape in American Poetry](#), which viewed the same New England landscape Brown painted through the words of noteworthy poets, such as Amesbury’s [John Greenleaf Whittier](#). Will Amos Reed’s book of verse *Through Broken Reeds* contains the poem [“On Seeing a Picture by J. Appleton Brown.”](#)

By all accounts Brown was [charming and modest](#), while at the same time comfortable in elevated circles. He served, for instance, as an officer in Boston’s [St. Botolph Club](#) with such luminaries as [Henry Cabot Lodge](#) and [Francis Parkman](#). Brown was also a member of the [Society of American Artists](#), and an associate of the [National Academy of Design](#). Appleton Brown [died on January 18, 1902 in Manhattan](#). He was 57. In the 1920s, his widow Agnes lived in West Newbury. Both Agnes and Appleton Brown are buried in Newburyport’s [Oak Hill Cemetery](#).

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Source: <https://archive.org/details/livingnewengland00robi/page/23/mode/1up>



“New England Landscape”

By J. Appleton Brown

Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Appleton_Brown#/media/File:John_Appleton_Brown_-_New_England_Landscape_-_15.880_-_Museum_of_Fine_Arts.jp



“Apple Trees in Blossom”

By J. Appleton Brown

Source:

<https://www.walmart.com/ip/Apple-Trees-in-Blossom-Print-Wall-Art-By-John-Appleton-Brown/773195665>